

...and his "date" with Rep. Judy Biggert

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(Washington, DC) – *As previously announced, Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez (D-IL-4) and Rep. Judy Biggert (R-IL-13) sat together on the Republican side of the House Chamber to listen to the President's State of the Union address. Congressman Gutierrez of Chicago is the Ranking Democratic Member of the House Financial Services Subcommittee on Insurance, Housing, and Community Opportunity and Rep. Biggert is the new Chairman of the Subcommittee and also from the Chicagoland area. Rep. Gutierrez is also a member of the House Intelligence Committee, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and the Congressional Progressive Caucus. The following is a statement by Rep. Gutierrez.*

I was pleased. The President focused on jobs and the economy and what is needed to bring the country together to continue building our prosperity. I know he sees immigration as a key building block for our economic success and an asset in our international competitiveness, so I am glad it was part of the speech. It is no secret that I am always pushing him to do more to address the issue, but by including immigration in the speech, it makes it clear that the President knows it is not an issue that can be ignored or a problem that will resolve itself without his consistent and persistent attention.

I enjoyed sitting with my friend Judy Biggert and there was a good feeling in the room. Those of us, like Judy and I, who know Gabby Giffords and worked closely with her thought it was a fitting tribute to her leadership-by-example in reaching out across the political aisle. Frankly, Judy and I didn't talk a lot of business or map out the agenda for the subcommittee or anything earth shattering. Rather, we socialized and made small talk about our families the way normal coworkers do. It was remarkably unremarkable, but something that unfortunately happens too rarely in this line of work where we are always too busy and caught up in the politics. Maybe I'll have her over to our side next year and bring popcorn.

The State of the Union and whether or not people from different parties sit together and how they spin the speech afterwards is all about tone-setting. Sometimes it only lasts through breakfast the next day and sometimes it sets a deeper and more resonant tone with staying power. We'll see. I certainly hope it is the latter and do what I can to keep it going because we will get much more accomplished for the American people that way.

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